



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 20, 2012

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WEBER RIVER, UTAH FISH PASSAGE PROJECT NAMED WATER TO WATCH FOR 2012

The National Fish Habitat Partnership (www.fishhabitat.org) has unveiled the **2012 10 "Waters to Watch"** list, a collection of rivers, streams, estuaries, watershed systems, shores and lakes that will benefit from strategic conservation efforts to protect, restore or enhance their current condition.

These waters represent a snapshot of this year's larger voluntary habitat conservation efforts in progress. These and other locally driven conservation projects are prioritized and implemented by regional Fish Habitat Partnerships that have formed throughout the country to implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The objective, to conserve freshwater, estuarine and marine habitats essential to the many fish and wildlife species that call these areas home is the foundation of the National Fish Habitat Partnership. In Utah, the Weber River has been selected as one of the 10 "Waters to Watch" for 2012, through the Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI) and the Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (DFHP).

Throughout the year, through the work of our partners these projects will be the showcase of conservation efforts working to avoid and reverse persistent declines in our nation's aquatic habitats. Having featured 60 partnership projects since 2007, the monitoring of these projects proves that partner efforts and strategies do make a difference.

The Weber River fish passage project is intended to protect native fishes and improve water use efficiency for water companies in the Weber River drainage. It will re-connect 17.5 total river miles and allow native trout and sucker species to pass one mainstem diversion and two culvert barriers in two tributaries.

Well-connected and spatially distributed spawning habitats are critical to ensure resiliency, genetic diversity and long-term persistence of Bonneville cutthroat trout (BCT) populations. This project is a significant step towards reconnecting and expanding Bonneville cutthroat trout and bluehead sucker habitat.

Habitat fragmentation is the primary threat to the persistence of this BCT population. Barriers on the Weber River have fragmented mainstem and spawning habitats. Restoring connectivity at these sites is a critical step towards improving the resiliency and genetic diversity of this population.

The project objective in 2012 is to facilitate upstream passage for as many species as possible in the

Lower Weber River drainage with target species being Bonneville cutthroat trout and bluehead sucker. Partners on this project include: Trout Unlimited (TU), Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and Utah Dept. of Transportation.

Since 2006 The National Fish Habitat Partnership has been a partner in 342 projects in 45 states benefiting fish habitat. "Our approach—teaming local, state, tribal, and federal agencies with private partners and stakeholders is the most strategic way we can make a difference in benefiting fish habitats," said Kelly Hepler, Chairman of the National Fish Habitat Board. "By watching these 10 models of our nation's aquatic conservation efforts underway, we can see real progress. Too often we have focused on treatment of symptoms with limited success. Through sound science and on-the-ground locally driven partnerships, these select Action Plan projects can be held high as a vision of what quality habitat should and can be, and how it benefits all people throughout the United States."

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is built on a framework of National Fish Habitat Partnerships. These regional-scale efforts include, **the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, the Western Native Trout Initiative, the Driftless Area Restoration Effort, the Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership, the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership, the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership, the Desert Fish Habitat Partnership, the Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership, the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership, the Fishers and Farmers Partnership, the Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership, the Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, the California Fish Passage Forum, the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership, the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership and the Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership.** There are also four "Candidate" Fish Habitat Partnerships that have stated their intent to apply for full NFHAP Board recognition.

About the National Fish Habitat Partnership:

The National Fish Habitat Partnership works to conserve fish habitat nationwide, leveraging federal, state, and private funding sources to achieve the greatest impact on fish populations through priority conservation projects. The national partnership implements the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and supports 18 regional grassroots partner organizations.

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<http://www.fishhabitat.org>